Remarks

Claims 1-30 have been canceled. Claims 31-48 have been added.   Claims 31-48 remain pending in the present application. Applicants respectfully request allowance of the pending claims.

Objections

Drawings

The Official Action objected to FIG. 2. In particular, the Official Action indicated that the label "stbb" should be "stbn". The Applicants have submitted herewith a proposed amendment to FIG. 2 in which the label "stbb" has been changed to "stbn". Further, the Official Action indicated that the label "clk 100" should be added to the clock inputs of flip-flops 132, 134, 136, and 138. Again, the proposed amendment to FIG. 2 adds the label "clk 100" to the clock inputs of flip-flops 132, 134, 136, and 138. The Official Action further objected to element 130 being referred to in the specification as a "mixing circuit" but labeled in FIG. 2 as a "muxing" circuit. The specification as being amended to refer to element 130 has a "muxing" circuit. Accordingly, no further amendment is required to FIG. 2.

Specification

The Official Action objected to the reference on page 8, line 18 to "loaden". Applicant has amended the specification to further clarify the meaning of this term.

The Official Action further indicated that "mode 312" an page 13, line 14 should be "mode 316". Applicants have amended the specification accordingly.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 112

The Official Action rejected claim 20 under 35 USC § 112 for having insufficient antecedent basis for the limitation "said second plurality of logic circuits" in lines 2 and 3. Applicants have canceled claim 20.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 102

The Official Action rejected claims 1-3, 5-6, 11-14, 16-17, and 23-24 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sine et al (US Patent No. 5,621,739). Applicants have canceled claims 1-3, 5-6, 11-14, 16-17, and 23-24.

Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 103

The Official Action rejected claims 4, 7-10, 15, 18-22, and 25-30 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable. Applicants have canceled claims 4, 7-10, 15, 18-22, and 25-30.

Newly Added Claims

The Applicants have added claims 31-48 which contain limitations not disclosed, taught, or suggested by the cited art. In particular, claim 31 recites a method comprising generating a first signal in response to detecting that at least one latched data signal fails to represent its corresponding bit of a buffer circuit, generating a second signal in response to detecting that all latched data signals fail to represent their corresponding bits of the buffer circuit, and determining that the buffer circuit is operational in response to a strobe window defined by a first signal and a second signal satisfying criteria associated with proper operation. The cited references fail to disclose,

teach, or suggest a method that determines that a buffer is operational in response to a strobe window defined as described above.

In order to expedite prosecution, the Applicants respectfully point out that while Kobayashi discloses generating an OFAIL signal in response to detecting that at least one test memory failed and an AFAIL signal in response to detecting that all test memories failed, one skilled in the art would have no motivation to combine/modify Kobayashi and Sine in the manner proposed. Kobayashi teaches generating the OFAIL and AFAIL signal in response to an erase test of flash memories. In order to erase a location of flash memory, multiple erase cycles typically must be performed to the location. Kobayashi utilizes the OFAIL and AFAIL signal to limit the number of erase cycles performed to the same flash memory location. Kobayashi however does not disclose adjusting a strobe delay to define a strobe window based upon the OFAIL and AFAIL signals. In light of Kobayashi's teaching of limiting erase cycles to a memory location based upon OFAIL and AFAIL signals, it's unclear as to why one skilled in the would combine/modify Kobayashi and Sine in the manner proposed.
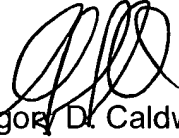
Conclusion

The foregoing is submitted as a full and complete response to the Official Action mailed January 2, 2004. Applicants submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration is requested, and allowance of the pending claims is earnestly solicited.

Should it be determined that an additional fee is due under 37 CFR §§1.16 or 1.17, or any excess fee has been received, please charge that fee or credit the amount of overcharge to deposit account #02-2666. If the Examiner believes that there are any

informalities which can be corrected by an Examiner's amendment, a telephone call to

the undersigned at (480) 554-4198 is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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